# Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence (COI-COC)

Introduction:

COI-COC is described in Stephen Covey's book 'The 7 Habits of the Highly Effective People'. Covey observes effective people are 'proactive' and not 'reactive'. They focus on what they can influence and what they can do. This helps them to use their time, energy and efforts effectively. They function better and as a result develop a winning attitude.

By contrast reactive people focus on things over which they have no control or influence. Thus they misdirect and waste their time, energy and efforts. The desired outcomes do not result, causing frustration and they end up feeling like losers. Over a period of time they develop a **victim attitude**.

He describes two circles. The first is the circle of concern that has our 'problems', say for instance, 'city traffic'. We do not have any 'control' over it as such. The second is the circle of influence that indicates what we can do or how we can 'influence' This may include, for instance, using public transport, shifting closer to work place etc.

Circle of Concern

Circle of Influence

City traffic

Using public transportation
Shifting closer to work place
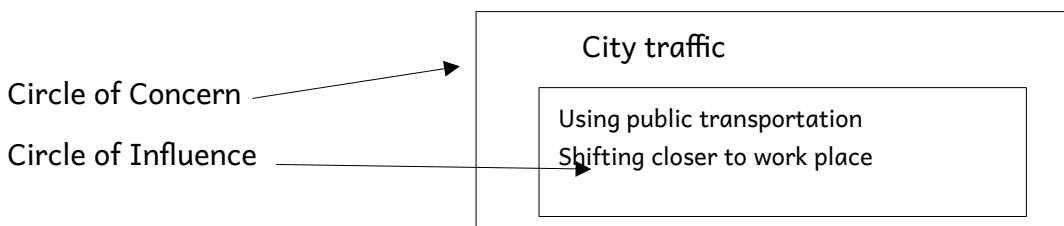
When we make a conscious effort to study our COI and see what we can do, our efforts and time get used in a productive way. On the contrary, only complaining about the situation may not lead us anywhere.

Reacting and Responding

In order to adopt the CoI approach it is important to understand the difference between 'reacting' and 'responding'.

Reacting, as used in this context, is almost instinctive, immediate, lacking reflection and generally in a negative mode. By just reacting a person stays in the problem and does not move towards solutions. When we just 'react' to the problem we may remain trapped in Circle of Concern. Normally we tend to react and dropping this habit helps us a great deal.

Responding, on the other hand, refers to a calm and reflective assessment of the situation followed by informed decisions on how best to proceed. Whenever we choose to 'respond' we start operating in our Circle of Influence. Instead of wasting our energy worrying about the problem we focus on what we can do within our reach and this helps us move towards solutions.

Conclusion

Focusing on Circle of Influence (what we can do) can be empowering. Focusing only on what

wee do not have control over (Circle of concern) is dis-empowering.

Once we consciously learn to increase our focus on Circle of Influence (CoI), we can enhance our personal effectiveness and professional excellence. The more we work on our CoI, the more it expands. We increase our networks and allies and friends. We can see more elements can be brought into our CoI. Gandhi increased his COI by his work and his character. Though his COC was also very big, he was able to address many of his concerns, relating to political issues as India's independence and social issues such as untouchability etc.

In a large system, we can feel powerless and dis-empowered. If we focus more on how others are not allowing us to work or having a negative impact on our work and our institution, we may feel demoralized. While we cannot ignore these aspects, if we can think more on what we can do in the situation (by ourselves, and with the help of friends/networks which we should keep building), we may be able to both do much more and also feel more empowered.

Books: The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey

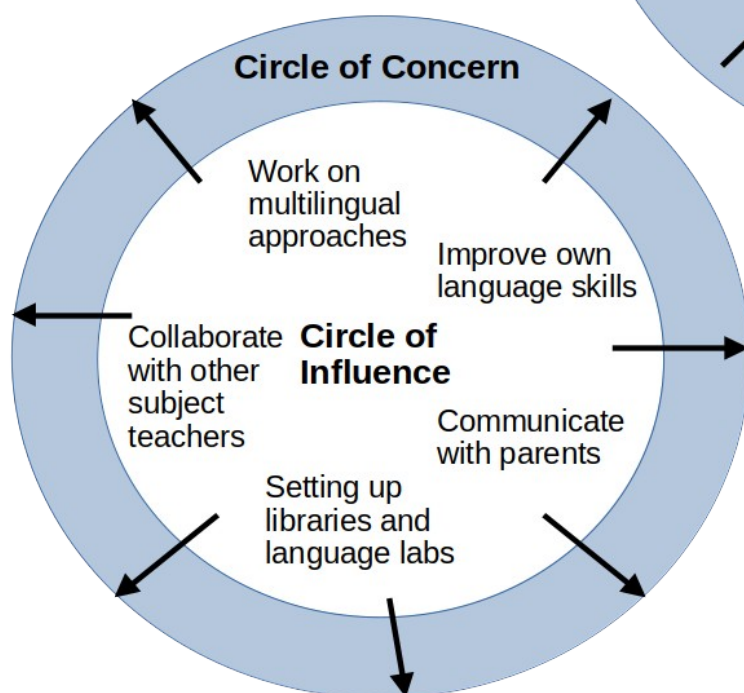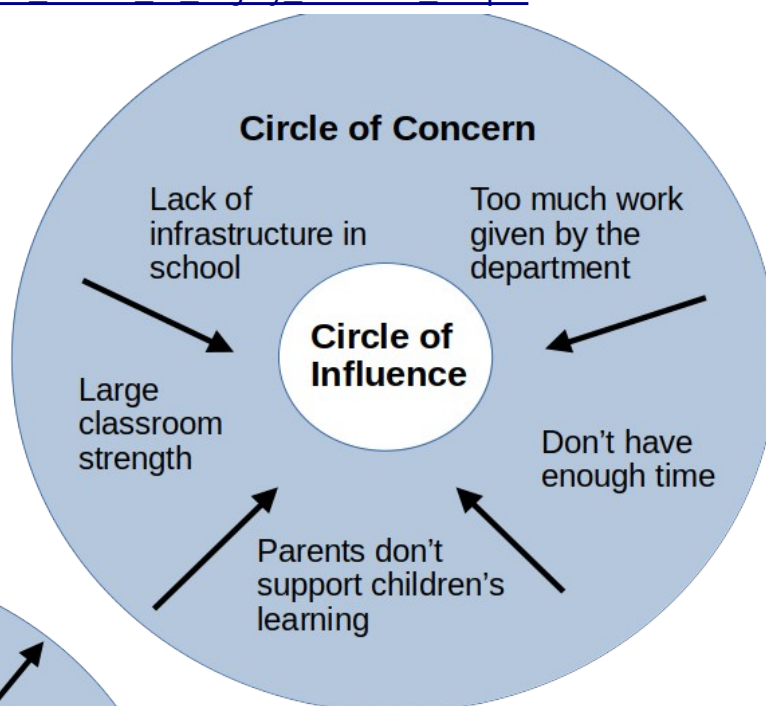http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Habits_of_Highly_Effective_People

https://itforchange.net/index.php/viewing-teacher-agency-through-circle-of-influence-framework

Limited COI

Circle of Concern

Lack of infrastructure in school

Too much work given by the department

Circle of Influence

Large classroom strength

Don't have enough time

Parents don't support children's learning

Expanding the COI

Circle of Concern

Work on multilingual approaches

Improve own language skills

Collaborate with other subject teachers

Circle of Influence

Communicate with parents

Setting up libraries and language labs